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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

10 May 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Sino-Soviet Discord on the Eve of the Summit

1. Soviet detente tactics towards the West have provoked, in Peiping's 15 April Red Flag criticisms,\* the bitterest and most fundamental Chinese Communist disagreement with Soviet policy yet evidenced. We consider that this Chinese discontent is almost certainly genuine, and that it may portend increased difficulties and conflicts in the Sino-Soviet partnership. This memorandum seeks to assess the sources of Chinese discontent, the Chinese motives in publishing such sharp criticisms on the eve of the Summit, and the significance of present Sino-Soviet discord for the future.

2. The Sources of Chinese Communist Discontent. The root cause lies in the vast difference which exists between Soviet and Chinese internal and foreign policy situations, moods, and needs.

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\* "Long Live Leninism," published by the editorial department of this key CCP journal on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of Lenin's birth.

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The austere and frenetic Chinese Communist scene is far removed from the relative affluence and the relative thaw of Soviet society. The necessary crisis mood within China both creates and needs the image of imminent attack by an imperialist invader; in the Chinese view, this must not be dissipated by Soviet initiative. The Chinese consider themselves frustrated by the US from completing their civil war (the acquisition of Taiwan) and from achieving that international acceptance which they feel is due them; the USSR must not do business with this hated US which would in any way thwart these aspirations. Peiping almost certainly aspires to become a nuclear-armed power; it may be concerned that Soviet negotiations with the West might in time somehow obstruct this aim. Lastly, the Chinese view of world developments is inspired by revolutionary zeal and doctrinal rigor; to the Chinese, Khrushchev's subtle course is a politically hazardous one for the Bloc.

3. Such considerations have found reflection in the increasingly discordant Sino-Soviet debate on foreign policy which has taken place since late 1957 -- on the estimate of the world situation and on the best ways of proceeding -- and which has now culminated in the present contention. Since the advent of Sputnik, the Chinese have held that Soviet weaponry advances have so altered the world balance of power that more forceful action can be taken to advance

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the Communist cause in the world; that the West is becoming weaker, more divided within itself, and more alienated from the peoples of the underdeveloped areas of the world; that while the West is still dangerous, its remaining strength should not be overestimated; that a nuclear war would not mean annihilation, especially in view of China's vast population; and that coexistence with the West is foolhardy, since this will only be used as a breathing spell for the preparation by the West, in desperation, of a virtually certain military attack on the Bloc at some future date.

4. The Chinese have not only persisted in these views but have intensified their criticism. This has been especially marked since Camp David, and the more significant because of the sharp Soviet displeasure that has been openly voiced during this period in Peiping (in October) and, it is reported, secretly voiced to Satellite leaders in Moscow (in February). Until April of this year, the Chinese had confined their attack largely to matters of foreign policy tactics. Now, the Chinese state their foreign policy differences in terms of fundamental questions of Communist doctrine.

5. The Red Flag article, in addition to repeating themes of recent months, asserts that the Chinese are today's only true Leninists and that Lenin's doctrines on war, revolution, and

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imperialism remain "irrefutable truths." By clear implication, the Chinese accuse Khrushchev personally and the Soviets in general of being opportunistic backsliders from Leninism who are misreading the world situation, permitting themselves to be hoodwinked by the West, "emasculating" revolutionary doctrine and zeal, and endangering the Communist revolutionary movement by an apparent (to the Chinese) readiness to compromise Communist principles in bargaining with the West. No significant easing of the international situation has taken place or can take place, say the Chinese; preparation for "just" wars of defense should thus go forward. The article is especially notable for the degree of unease it shows that the Soviets may be considering some kind of course which might lessen the tempo of Communist subversive efforts in the underdeveloped world; instead, say the Chinese, the only promising and proper way to gain power in such areas is by forceful revolution, and such movements should be stimulated. In a key passage of the article, the Chinese caution:

All these questions confront every serious Marxist-Leninist, and require deep consideration. It is obvious that whether these questions are viewed and handled correctly or incorrectly has a close bearing on the success or failure of the proletarian cause and the destiny of world humanity.

6. That the Soviets consider this article a frontal attack on the ideological bases of Khrushchev's present policies is indicated by the fact that Presidium member Otto Kuusinen answered

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the Chinese criticisms, in a formal Lenin Day speech in Moscow on 22 April, and in so doing invoked Lenin's authority to justify the USSR's present coexistence policies. The issue has thus been joined, and on the doctrinal level -- always indicative that intra-Communist debate has indeed become serious.

7. Chinese Communist Motives. The Chinese motives in publishing such bitter criticism at this time are probably both fundamental and tactical, and both directly related to the Summit and relatively coincidental with it. In the first place, the Chinese are in basic disagreement with what they consider to be the Soviet estimate of the world situation and its optimum opportunities; to them, this estimate is incorrect and a dangerous basis for policy. This difference is aggravated by a revived mood of doctrinal assertiveness in China at the present time: "Mao Tse-tung's ideology" is being elevated and the urban commune program appears to have as a long-range goal the achievement of a pure state of "communism" in China. In this state of mind, the Chinese are unlikely to knuckle under to Khrushchev, whose views they question and whose status as a theoretician they deny. Given these considerations and Communist China's sense of foreign policy frustration, the Red Flag outburst is in one sense a natural outgrowth of more than two years of debate

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which has become the more contentious as Chinese views and aspirations have apparently been ignored or denied by Moscow. The Lenin anniversary offered a convenient and relevant occasion for a verbal sortie.

8. But the imminent Summit, the goal of Khrushchev's recent policies and the focus of Chinese unease, almost certainly introduced a note of urgency and sharpened the tone of Chinese comment. Here a number of considerations of tactical leverage on the USSR probably apply. The Chinese leaders are using the weapon of polemical attack in an effort to bring pressure to bear on Khrushchev so that he may not in fact give away anything to the West which might thwart world revolution or Chinese aspirations. The Chinese are taking their case to world communism, perhaps appealing to certain leaders in the Satellite countries and even in the USSR who may share certain of their reservations. Peiping is also going on record with world communism that its doctrinal views and estimates of the situation are correct and will be proved so. Lastly, the Chinese are probably also accenting their refusal to be bound by any commitments Khrushchev may make.\*

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\* The question of whether Chinese pressures may in fact constrain Khrushchev's freedom of action is discussed in O/NE Staff Memorandum No. 25-60, "Khrushchev at the Summit."

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9. Significance for the Future. The principal immediate question is whether the Chinese Communists are likely to renew the aggressive foreign policy posture they have at times displayed in the past/. Decision for such action could spring from a combination of belligerent mood, great expectations, frustration, and desire to disrupt a believed Soviet detente with the West. The best present outlets for such action would seem to be the exerting of strong military pressures in the Taiwan Strait or the sponsoring of heightened "armed liberation movements" in Southeast Asia.

10. While such possibilities will bear watching, we see no firm indications of any extreme Chinese action and believe it unlikely, at least for the near future. Despite discontent with its lot and with Soviet strategy and tactics, the overriding foreign policy needs of Peiping continue to be Bloc unity and Soviet military and economic support. In addition, Chinese leaders cannot be certain that extreme action would in fact achieve the results desired. Thus we anticipate that Chinese action will probably be limited in coming weeks to shrill criticism of the US; reiteration that violence and conflict are inevitable as long as capitalist states exist, and that nuclear war would not mean the annihilation of the world or the Communist system; and perhaps a harsher tone

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towards events in the Indochina states and some increase in military pressures in the Taiwan Strait short of those of August 1958. With respect to the Summit itself, we feel that the Chinese will probably confine their disruptive tactics to continuing polemics and to overtures for added Bloc support for their views.

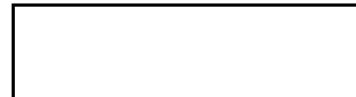
11. The present discord presents a number of estimative problems for the future. Does the present disarray in Sino-Soviet relations indicate that even our considerable stress on Sino-Soviet differences in recent NIEs has not been great enough? How well do the Chinese know or estimate Soviet intentions? What degree of confusion will Chinese doctrinal assertiveness create within the Bloc? What results will flow, for Khrushchev and for the Chinese, if his detente course proves to be a failure? What significance will continued Chinese bad temper toward both the West and the USSR have on future disarmament questions? And what effect, if any, will all this have on Communist China's acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability?

12. We consider a major break in the Sino-Soviet partnership to be highly unlikely in the near future; each partner almost certainly needs the other too much to permit this to happen. The Chinese nevertheless will probably continue to question the Soviet

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leadership's acuity and to challenge Moscow's ideological authority. This, together with probable Chinese foreign policy impatience, will in turn spur Soviet irritation. Finally, even a hardening of Soviet policy toward the West will have only a palliative, not a remedial, effect, since the basic wide variance which exists in Soviet and Chinese Communist internal and foreign policy needs will not diminish. Thus, we feel that present Sino-Soviet discord will serve as a catalyst which will precipitate more underlying differences, and that accordingly the entire relationship between the two allies may be marked by increasing difficulties and conflicts.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES



ABBOT SMITH  
Acting Chairman

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